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REVITALIZATION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

This report is presented to assist the Council in reviewing the progress achieved in the implementation of its resolutions 1988/77 and 1989/114 and decision 1990/205 on the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council. It addresses questions concerning the Council's functions with regard to policy formulation, monitoring, operational activities for development and co-ordination, its working methods, organization of work and secretariat support in a consolidated manner.

Concerning the Council's policy formulation function, the report contains suggestions on the annual general discussion, the informal exchange of views and the modality for in-depth consideration of major policy issues, as well as on the consideration of urgent and emerging issues and on the participation of the specialized agencies.

Suggestions are also made in regard to other responsibilities of the Council identified in its resolution 1988/77, namely, concerning operational activities for development, monitoring and co-ordination. These include proposals on the Council's consideration of the reports of the Joint Meetings of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination and the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, for achieving a sharper focus in its work and for carrying out its statutory responsibilities in respect of the work of its subsidiary bodies.

The report also addresses the question of documentation, stresses the need for reports that are more analytical and calls for a review of the overall volume of documentation, taking into account the capacity of the Secretariat, as well as the ability of member States to utilize the information presented fully.

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The report points out that while the process of revitalization initiated by the Council two years ago has resulted in a number of improvements, it has certain limitations, particularly since the Council is part of a chain of intergovernmental meetings. It stresses the importance of the overall functioning of the intergovernmental machinery in the economic and social sectors for a revitalization of the Council.

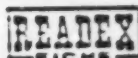
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INTRODUCTION

1. At its second regular session of 1988, the Council adopted resolution 1988/77, which contained interrelated measures aimed at revitalizing the Council, improving its functioning and enabling it to exercise effectively its functions and powers as set out in the Charter of the United Nations and relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Council. At its second regular session of 1989, the Council considered the report of the Secretary-General on the revitalization of the Council (E/1989/95), agreed on further measures for the implementation of its resolution 1988/77 and requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Council, in sufficient time for consideration at its organizational session for 1990, proposals for a draft six-year work programme on major policy themes, a biennial programme of work of the Council and modalities for the in-depth discussions on major policy themes (resolution 1989/114).
2. Having considered the report of the Secretary-General (E/1990/14) at its organizational session for 1990, the Council adopted decision 1990/205 on the implementation of its resolutions on revitalization. In that decision, the Council agreed on a number of issues concerning its functioning, established a provisional multi-year work programme for 1992-1994, and invited the Secretary-General, in consultation with the President of the Council, to take the necessary measures to ensure adequate preparation for the special meeting to be convened during the second regular session of the Council in 1991, including the possibility of proposing, at the second regular session of 1990, appropriate modalities for the Council's in-depth consideration of major policy themes.
3. Following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 41/213 on the review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations, the Council established a Special Commission to carry out an in-depth study of the United Nations intergovernmental structure and functions in the economic and social fields (resolution 1987/112). Although the Special Commission was unable to agree on a set of recommendations, its work was summarized in a report (E/1988/75) considered by the Council at its second regular session of 1988 and subsequently by the General Assembly at its forty-third session. In its resolution 43/174, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the intergovernmental structure and secretariat support structures to the Assembly at its forty-fourth session. In its resolution 44/103, the General Assembly stressed the need for full implementation of Council resolutions 1988/77 and 1989/114, including the provisions related to the secretariat support structure of the Council, and requested the Secretary-General to present a report on the implementation of those resolutions so that the Council could review the question at its second regular session of 1990.
4. This report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 44/103 and Council decision 1990/205. Information on the progress achieved in the implementation of Council resolutions 1988/77 and 1989/114 and decision 1990/205 is presented in a consolidated manner and is intended to supplement information provided in previous reports.

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I. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS AND DECISION ON REVITALIZATION

A. Policy formulation

5. In resolutions 1988/77 and 1989/114, the Council specified a number of measures intended to strengthen its policy formulation function. The implementation of these measures is discussed in the following paragraphs.

1. Annual general discussion

6. The Council's annual discussion of international economic and social policy, including regional and sectoral developments, has been reduced by one day and will now take place during the first four working days of the second regular session, in accordance with Council resolution 1989/114. Given the usefulness of the general discussion and the number of speakers who wish to participate, it may not be possible to further reduce the time allocated for it. It may be noted that this schedule can be maintained only if all participants observe the suggested time-limit on interventions. These factors should be taken into account when the Council considers future arrangements for its in-depth consideration of major policy themes.

7. In the programme of work of the Council's second regular sessions of 1989 and 1990, provision was made to set aside one day, upon conclusion of all statements in the general discussion, to be devoted to an informal exchange of views among the members of the Council, with the active participation of the executive heads of organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system concerned. In this context, it may be recalled that the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) suggested that it would be useful to identify in advance the issues that would be raised in such discussions in order to permit the executive heads to make the necessary preparations (see E/1989/95, annex I). The Council, at its organizational session for 1990, selected the following theme for an informal exchange of views at its second regular session of 1990:

"The impact of the recent evolution of East-West relations on the growth of the world economy, in particular on the economic growth and development of developing countries, as well as on international economic co-operation" (see Council decision 1990/205).

8. The proposed informal exchange of views should assist in the preparation for the Council's subsequent in-depth consideration of that theme, which has been identified as an urgent and emerging issue for discussion in 1991. This will be the Council's first occasion to utilize this modality, which was provided for in its resolution 1989/114. Based on the experience, the Council may wish to consider whether more structured preparations, including the preparation of informal background papers, will be required for future informal exchanges.

9. In the future, the Council may also wish to consider the usefulness of inviting two or three eminent scholars or knowledgeable persons outside the United Nations system, as well as persons within the system, to participate in such

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informal discussions. This could be done in consultation with the President of the Council, its Bureau and the Secretariat at the organizational session.

2. Major policy themes

Multi-year work programme

10. In resolution 1988/77, the Council decided to undertake annual in-depth discussions of previously identified major policy themes selected on the basis of a multi-year work programme. In decision 1990/205, it decided to establish, on a provisional basis, the following multi-year work programme for its in-depth consideration of major policy themes during the period 1992-1994:

1992

The international trade system and its impact on the development of the developing countries;

Eradication of poverty in the developing countries, including the impact of structural adjustment programmes on vulnerable groups;

1993

Environment and development;

Population, development and socio-economic indicators;

1994

Technology and industrialization in the development process of the developing countries;

International co-operation against illicit production, supply, demand, trafficking and distribution of narcotic drugs.

11. The provisional multi-year work programme is to be reviewed annually and adjusted on a roll-over basis as necessary, in accordance with the provisions of Council resolutions 1988/77 and 1989/114 and decision 1990/205. In its review, the Council should bear in mind the need to maintain a balance between social and economic issues, the work programmes of the organs and organizations of the United Nations system and the progress made in the revitalization of the Council.

Thematic analyses

12. The in-depth consideration of major policy themes is expected to assist the Council in exercising effectively its functions as set out in the Charter of the United Nations and relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Council.

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To this end, the Council decided to discontinue the cross-organizational programme analyses and replace them with thematic analyses on previously identified major policy themes. The Council further decided that such thematic analyses should review existing activities and be forward-looking in identifying policy options. In its resolution 1989/114, the Council set out in detail the framework for the thematic analyses.

13. The first thematic analysis will be prepared in connection with the Council's in-depth consideration, in 1991, of the urgent and emerging issue identified in decision 1990/205 (see paras. 7 and 8 above).

Modality for the Council's in-depth consideration of major policy themes

14. In establishing the provisional multi-year work programme, the Council decided that the major policy themes would be given in-depth consideration in the context of a high-level special meeting of the Council and that the Council would review its current sessional arrangements. At the same time, the Council decided that the urgent and emerging issue selected for 1991 should be given in-depth consideration at a special meeting at an appropriately high level, without excluding the ministerial level, and that the special meeting should be separate from the regular proceedings of the Council and precede its general discussion of international economic and social policy, including regional and sectoral developments. The Council invited the Secretary-General, in consultation with the President of the Council, to take the necessary measures to ensure adequate preparation for the special meeting, including the possibility of proposing, at the second regular session of 1990, appropriate modalities for that purpose (see Council decision 1990/205).

15. There is an obvious need to reach a clear understanding in regard to the modality for the Council's in-depth consideration of major policy themes and urgent and emerging issues. Any arrangement agreed upon should retain a degree of flexibility so as to be effective, practical and assist the Council in achieving substantive progress.

16. The major policy themes included in the Council's proposed multi-year work programme for 1992-1994 reflect a balance between economic and social issues. Each year the Council will take up two major themes for in-depth consideration.

17. The Council's decision to give in-depth consideration to previously identified major policy themes represents an addition to its current work programme. The Council may therefore wish either to extend the duration of its regular sessions to consider appropriate changes in its work programme to accommodate the in-depth consideration within its regular schedule without extending the sessions. In this connection, attention is drawn to the Council's decision to review its present sessional arrangements.

18. Bearing these factors in mind, it would seem appropriate for the Council to consider themes pertaining to essentially social questions at its first regular session and themes that are essentially economic at its second regular session. Thus, the Council will consider one major policy theme at each regular session. To ensure that the Council is able to benefit fully from this modality, the in-depth

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consideration of major policy themes should be distinct and separate from the regular proceedings of the Council. The Council has already decided that in 1991 the urgent and emerging issue selected will be considered at a special meeting of the Council, to take place over a period of two days, prior to the Council's annual general discussion, and that it should be at a high political level, not excluding the ministerial level.

19. In the past, the Secretary-General has proposed ministerial-level meetings of the Council. Such high-level meetings would not only enhance the authority of the Council but would also enable it to take decisions in specific sectors at a high political level and adopt a more thematic approach to its work. The Council may wish to consider convening one ministerial-level meeting for in-depth consideration of a major policy theme each year, alternating between an issue with a social focus and an issue with an economic focus at its first and second regular sessions, respectively. The ministerial meetings could be of two days' duration and, though separate and distinct from the regular work programme of the Council, would nevertheless be included in its overall schedule.

20. For example, in 1992, the Council could consider the theme "The international trade system and its impact on the development of developing countries" at a special ministerial-level meeting in conjunction with its second regular session. In 1993, it could consider the theme "Population, development and socio-economic indicators" at a special ministerial-level meeting in conjunction with its first regular session.

21. The Council's decision on the modality of its in-depth consideration should retain a degree of flexibility and be reviewed annually in the context of the multi-year work programme. This would enable the Council to determine whether in any given year there was an urgent and emerging issue requiring in-depth consideration, the level of participation, the manner in which the issue would be considered and the timing.

Participation of the specialized agencies

22. The Council attaches considerable importance to the active participation of the specialized agencies and to their inputs in its deliberations. To this end, the Council has invited the executive heads of organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to participate actively in the in-depth discussions and to co-operate closely with the Secretary-General in the preparation of the thematic analyses. It will be recalled that ACC welcomed the possibility of more active and meaningful involvement in the work of the Council (see E/1989/95, annex I). It will also be recalled that ACC noted that the thematic analyses requested by the Council in resolution 1988/77 for the in-depth consideration of major policy themes would serve as an appropriate framework for providing information on the steps taken by the specialized agencies to give effect to the recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council. Since the thematic analyses would also summarize the activities of the specialized agencies in particular fields, ACC was of the view that those analyses would be the analytical summaries that the Council wished to see resumed.

23. In response to Council resolution 1988/77, a number of specialized agencies made information on their activities available at the Council's second regular session of 1989. The Council was informed of those contributions in a note by the Secretariat (E/1989/INF.8). The specialized agencies that provided such information included the International Labour Organisation, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the World Health Organization, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Universal Postal Union, the International Maritime Organization, the World Intellectual Property Organization, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

24. Information regarding the multi-year work programme of major policy themes was provided to the organizations of the United Nations system through the Organizational Committee of ACC to enable them, as appropriate, to assist the Council in reviewing the work programme at its organizational session each year. In this connection, it will be recalled that in the report of the Secretary-General (E/1989/95) a number of suggestions were made on strengthening the participation of the specialized agencies in the work of the Council through, *inter alia*, a more focused and meaningful dialogue between the organizations of the system and the Council members, both during and between sessions of the Council, as well as by inviting them to propose major policy themes for the Council's in-depth consideration.

25. The thematic analyses prepared in accordance with the guidelines agreed upon in Council resolution 1989/114, and other appropriate documentation, should enable the high-level special meeting of the Council to review, in the identified area, relevant policy decisions, ongoing and planned programmatic activities, the implementation process, monitoring mechanisms, the interrelationship between economic and social dimensions, co-ordination measures and the functioning of the relevant subsidiary bodies. The decisions taken at such high-level meetings should contribute to greater harmonization in the activities of the United Nations system and should lead to greater clarity and focus in policy direction.

3. Urgent and emerging issues

26. In resolution 1988/77, the Council decided to address, as and when necessary, urgent and emerging issues relating to acute international economic and special problems. As noted above, by its decision 1990/205, the Council decided that it would take up, as an urgent and emerging issue for in-depth consideration in 1991, the same issue selected for an informal exchange of views in 1990: The impact of the recent evolution of East-West relations on the growth of the world economy, in particular, on the economic growth and development of the developing countries, as well as on international economic co-operation.

27. The Council further decided that the discussion would take place at a special meeting at an appropriately high level, without excluding the ministerial level, which would be held on 4 and 5 July 1991, during the second regular session of the Council. The special meeting will be separate from the regular proceedings of the

Council and precede its general discussion of international economic and social policies, including regional and sectoral developments. In this connection, the Council invited the Secretary-General, in consultation with the President of the Council, to take the necessary measures to ensure adequate preparation for the special meeting, including the possibility of proposing at the second regular session of 1990, appropriate modalities, for that purpose. The Council also invited all the relevant organs and organizations of the United Nations system to contribute to the successful outcome of the special meeting.

B. Monitoring

28. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/197 and Council resolution 1988/77, the Council is expected to monitor the implementation of the overall strategies, policies and priorities established by the Assembly and the Council. The Secretary-General has stressed the need for a more systematic approach to the monitoring function of the Council and put forward a number of suggestions in this regard, including the suggestion that the Council might consider the following (see E/1989/95, para. 60):

"(a) Conducting a periodic review of the progress made in the implementation of the International Development Strategy, which provides a framework incorporating policies and priorities agreed upon by Governments and covering various sectors of United Nations system activity;

"(b) Considering specific modalities for follow-up and monitoring when adopting resolutions;

"(c) Requesting ACC to assist in reviewing and monitoring the implementation of overall policy guidelines and priorities, particularly in respect of their translation into mutually complementary or jointly planned activities."

29. It was also proposed that in preparing the draft programme of work for consideration by the Council, the Secretary-General could draw attention to policies and priorities that the Council should monitor and put forward suggestions on how these should be monitored (see E/1989/95, para. 60).

C. Operational activities for development

30. In its resolution 1988/77, the Council elaborated its role in regard to the operational activities for development. The Council decided that it should recommend to the General Assembly overall priorities and policy guidelines for operational activities for development. In the context of its co-ordination function, it should try to ensure greater coherence and effectiveness of the activities of the United Nations system; address a limited number of policy co-ordination issues each year, including those identified in General Assembly resolution 42/196; carry out, once every three years, a comprehensive policy review; and monitor the follow-up to its recommendations.

31. The General Assembly, at its forty-fourth session, adopted a comprehensive resolution on operational activities for development (resolution 44/211), in which it requested the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation to submit a proposed three-year schedule for the implementation of the resolution by all the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to the Council at its second regular session of 1990. The Assembly also requested the Director-General to submit, for the next three years, reports on the implementation of the resolution, on a consolidated system-wide basis, to the Council at its second regular session.

32. The General Assembly further requested the Director-General to draw to the attention of the Council, at its second regular session of 1990, recommendations in the report concerning the 1989 triennial comprehensive policy review (A/44/324-E/1989/106 and Add.1-5) on which he considered additional guidance required, particularly those facilitating the full implementation of the resolution.

33. With regard to the Council carrying out more effectively its role of governance and guidance of the operational activities for development, the Director-General made a number of proposals in his report (see A/44/324/Add.3-E/1989/106/Add.3, annex). In making those suggestions, he noted that statements made by delegations in the General Assembly and the Council had identified the absence of sustained and concerted positions on key issues by member States in different governing bodies as one of the obstacles to significant improvement in the coherence of operational activities.

34. In the same report, the Director-General suggested that member States might wish to review ways of clarifying and strengthening capacities for exercising governance and providing overall guidance. It was suggested that they might wish to consider the possibility of establishing, within the framework of the Council, an operational activities committee entrusted with the responsibility of undertaking in-depth reviews of policies and principles on the basis of information provided by individual governing bodies. A number of other ideas were put forward to strengthen the governmental oversight function, as well as to enhance the capacity of the Office of the Director-General to assist member States in this regard. The Council, when considering the documentation on operational activities for development at its second regular session of 1990, may also wish to take into account the suggestions contained in the note by the Secretary-General (A/44/324/Add.3-E/1989/106/Add.3, annex).

35. It will be recalled that the Council decided to consider, at its organizational session for 1990, arrangements to ensure that it would be able to undertake its annual consideration of operational activities for development in a focused and co-ordinated manner, with the necessary documentation available in accordance with the established procedures (decision 1989/186). At the organizational session, the Council decided that in conducting its annual policy review for 1990, it would focus on ways and means of ensuring the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211. The Council also reiterated its request that the subsidiary bodies concerned should highlight policy recommendations and decisions resulting from their deliberations for consideration and appropriate

action by the Council, and requested the Secretary-General to make available the necessary documentation in strict compliance with the relevant rules of procedures of the Council (decision 1990/201, sect. P).

D. Co-ordination

36. In its resolutions 1988/77 and 1989/114, the Council made a number of recommendations to strengthen its capacity to co-ordinate the activities of the United Nations system in the economic, social and related areas. The Council decided that it would carry out its co-ordination functions as an integral part of its work and particularly in the context of its in-depth consideration of major policy themes. In this context, it requested that the proposed thematic analyses should highlight co-ordination issues.

37. In its resolution 44/194, the General Assembly agreed on a number of measures to strengthen co-ordination, which included a request to ACC to modify substantially the format and content of its annual overview report in the light of the relevant conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination at its twenty-ninth session. 1/ The Assembly also invited the Council and the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination to improve their consideration of the annual overview report of ACC in accordance with their respective mandates. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to make the annual overview report available at the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, together with the relevant conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and the Council on that report, in accordance with existing practice.

38. In the same resolution, the General Assembly invited the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination and ACC to discuss, in a thorough manner, at their Joint Meetings in 1990, all measures for improving the efficacy of the Joint Meetings, including their structure and level of participation. Attention is drawn to the Council's decision to hold the Joint Meetings in New York in conjunction with the autumn session of the ACC, in order to facilitate the participation of the members of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination at a high level as well as the participation of the executive heads of specialized agencies (resolution 1988/64). Accordingly, the report on the twenty-fourth series of Joint Meetings (E/1990/4) will be presented to the Council, through the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, at its second regular session of 1990.

39. This change in the schedule of the Joint Meetings presents some difficulties for a timely consideration of the report by the Council. According to present practice, the Council is only able to consider the report on the Joint Meetings after a delay of more than half a year, at its second regular session of the following year. The Council may therefore wish to consider the possibility of holding a one-day resumed session following the Joint Meetings in order to take appropriate action on the recommendations and conclusions contained in the report.

E. Working methods and organization of work

40. In accordance with the recommendations contained in Council resolutions 1988/77 and 1989/114, a number of steps have been taken which have helped to improve the working methods and organization of work of the Council. Details in this regard are contained in the two earlier reports of the Secretary-General (E/1989/95 and E/1990/14) and are explained elsewhere in this report.

41. As noted, the Council has agreed on an indicative multi-year work programme for the in-depth consideration of major policy themes during the period 1992-1994, which will be considered in the context of a high-level special meeting, and has agreed to review the current sessional arrangements. With regard to the review, it will be recalled that in resolution 1988/77, the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit, at its second regular session of 1989, a report on the feasibility and comparative costs of holding at the United Nations with the present in-session arrangements, one consolidated or two regular sessions of the Council. The information requested was provided in annex V to the Secretary-General's report (E/1989/95).

F. Documentation

42. The overall question of volume and quality of documentation continues to be of concern. The task force on documentation established by the Council pursuant to resolution 1988/77 has presented some recommendations in this regard in its report (E/1990/13). However, much remains to be achieved. In examining the overall question of documentation, the constraints on the capacity of the Secretariat, as well as the ability of member States to utilize fully the documents presented, must be taken into account. There is a continuing sentiment that the overall volume of documentation should be reduced and that the inputs provided require greater focus. While each individual request for additional documentation or continuation of previously mandated reports appears to be fully justified, all these requests taken together add up to excessive and often duplicative documentation. The question of documentation remains a serious problem and deserves continuous attention from the Council. It is hoped that the task force will address this question in its final report.

43. In this connection, the decision of the Council to receive consolidated reports for consideration under consolidated agenda items (see resolution 1988/77) needs to be clarified. In its report (E/1990/13), the task force on documentation recommended that the Council should, as a general rule, have before it under the appropriate agenda item, as required, only the report of the subsidiary body concerned, the relevant consolidated report and the relevant reports requested in Council resolution 1989/114, paragraphs 4 and 11. The Secretary-General has also raised a number of questions in this regard which need to be addressed by the Council (see document E/1989/95).

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G. Secretariat support

44. In its resolution 1988/77, the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Council, at its second regular session of 1989, proposals on the structure and composition of a separate and identifiable secretariat support structure for the Council, which would undertake the substantive functions and technical servicing required to implement the relevant provisions of that resolution. At the same time, to achieve better and more effective co-ordination of the economic, social and related activities of the United Nations system, including operational activities for development, the Council called for the strengthening of the Office of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation. In this context, the Council also called for the full implementation of the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolutions 32/197 and 33/202, including those concerning improved policy planning. In its resolution 1989/114, the Council further requested the Secretary-General, in order to fully and effectively implement its resolution 1988/77, to take into account the following considerations in providing secretariat support for the Council: (a) the secretariat structure for providing substantive support in regard to the preparation of thematic analyses and consolidated reports should be organizationally distinct and identifiable; (b) the expertise of other organizations of the United Nations system should be drawn upon, as appropriate; and (c) such secretariat support should be provided, as appropriate, inter alia, within existing resources, through redeployment of staff and the use of extrabudgetary resources.

45. In his report (E/1989/95), the Secretary-General informed the Council that he was considering ways and means of providing effective and coherent secretariat support for the Council and that he would report further on the matter to the General Assembly at its forty-fourth session, pursuant to Assembly resolution 43/174, taking into consideration, inter alia, the outcome of the Council discussions on revitalization.

46. In his note to the General Assembly (A/44/747), the Secretary-General observed that the substantive requirements envisaged in the resolutions adopted by the Council included the preparation of a number of new reports, notably the thematic analyses and the issue-oriented consolidated reports. The preparation of these reports will require effective management in order to co-ordinate the inputs from the substantive offices of the United Nations system as a whole and to ensure consistency in the policy orientation. In the same note, the Secretary-General pointed out that a number of major intergovernmental deliberations were scheduled to be held during 1990 and that the outcome of those deliberations would have critical implications for the United Nations intergovernmental structure and functions. This also applied to the restructuring of the secretariat, which necessarily would have to take into account decisions in regard to the restructuring of intergovernmental machinery. The Secretary-General informed the General Assembly that in keeping with the overall responsibilities of the Director-General, he had decided to assign to the Director-General the responsibility of ensuring the provision of substantive support as called for in Council resolution 1989/114. He further pointed out that it was his intention to keep the secretariat structure under review.

47. The attention of the Council is also drawn, in this connection, to the analytical report of the Secretary-General (A/45/226) on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 41/213 on the review of the financial and administrative functioning of the United Nations, which was prepared in response to Assembly resolution 44/200 A and will be considered by the Assembly at its forty-fifth session.

II. CONCLUSIONS

48. The resolutions and decisions adopted by the Council on revitalization are designed to assist the Council in achieving a sharper focus in its work through a reorganization of its working methods, better presentation of documentation, reports that are more analytical and a reduction in the overall volume of documentation. While the process of revitalization initiated by the Council two years ago has resulted in a number of improvements, such a process necessarily has its limitations. The Council, particularly in the light of its co-ordination function, is part of a chain of intergovernmental meetings. A large number of the requests for the reports the Council is required to consider originate in other United Nations intergovernmental bodies, particularly the General Assembly. Appropriate changes and improvements would need to be introduced in the overall intergovernmental framework in order for the Council and the United Nations to realize their full potential in the economic and social sectors. In this context, it would also be useful to review the present reporting arrangements, as well as the manner in which the Council considers the reports submitted to it.

49. In so far as the organizational and working arrangements are concerned, these have already been implemented to a large extent. Particular reference can be made to the early election of the President and the Bureau of the Council, the role of the Bureau, and consultations on the agenda and work programme of the Council, as well as the monitoring of the state of preparation of documents. The Council has agreed on a multi-year work programme for in-depth consideration of major policy themes during the period 1992-1994. Every effort needs to be made to ensure that the Council's in-depth consideration of these themes leads to appropriate policy recommendations, as well as to improvements in co-ordination and in streamlining of the agenda and working arrangements of the Council. On its part, the Secretariat will make every effort to ensure that the documentation requested assists the Council in fulfilling these objectives. In this connection, the Council's attention is drawn to the decision of the Committee for Development Planning, at its twenty-sixth session, to establish a closer link with the work programme of the Council, particularly its in-depth consideration of major policy themes. This will contribute to strengthening the substantive input into the work of the Council.

50. While these are positive developments, there still remains a need to change the perception of the role of the Council in order to enhance its effectiveness. Governments should make better use of the Council, the Secretariat should provide more analytical and more focused documentation and the Council should give more professional and functional consideration to issues on its agenda. The Council may therefore wish to allow the present arrangements to consolidate themselves before reviewing the process further, possibly in 1992.

51. Recent improvements in the political environment and the narrowing of differences in various economic philosophies have created a viable opportunity for the Council to reassert its leadership role in the economic and social sectors. The Council's annual general discussions of economic policy, including regional and sectoral developments, have been found useful in highlighting major international developments in the economic and social fields and in promoting a better understanding of the policies of Governments but have so far not resulted in any concrete conclusions. In his report (E/1989/95), the Secretary-General proposed that each year the President of the Council, in consultation with member States, should attempt to summarize the major conclusions of the general discussion. Such a summary could serve as a policy statement of the Council on major economic and social questions. The Council could greatly enhance its authority by utilizing this opportunity to identify policy divergencies and convergencies among member States and by agreeing upon broad policy guidelines in the overall context of development.

Notes

1/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 16 (A/44/16).



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CO-ORDINATION QUESTIONS

Consumer protection

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

Economic and Social Council resolution 1988/61 on consumer protection reflects the growing importance assigned by Member Governments to the implementation of the guidelines for consumer protection. The guidelines, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 39/248, provide a framework for Governments to use in elaborating and strengthening consumer protection policies and legislation. They are also intended to encourage international co-operation in this field.

The present report has been prepared pursuant to Council resolution 1988/61. It covers the activities undertaken to promote the implementation of the guidelines, and contains proposals for possible future work in this regard. It is suggested that meaningful progress could be achieved by specific actions, such as: (a) the organization of regional seminars and follow-up on their recommendations; (b) the convening of workshops on topical issues with the aim of elaborating specific guidelines in these areas; (c) analytical work to identify areas of emerging concern; and (d) the development of greater co-ordination in the United Nations system to best answer the needs of Governments in the protection of consumers, through an *ad hoc* and flexible co-ordinating mechanism including, subject-oriented inter-agency consultations.

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INTRODUCTION

1. At its second regular session of 1988, the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 1988/61 on consumer protection. In so doing, it set a new mandate for the implementation of the guidelines for consumer protection, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 39/248 of 9 April 1985. The Council urged all Governments to implement the guidelines and encouraged them to develop further, as appropriate, national legislation and policies in this field. It also requested the Secretary-General to: (a) continue to promote, subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources, the implementation of the guidelines and to ensure system-wide co-ordination in this regard; (b) continue to provide assistance to Governments, in particular those of developing countries, in implementing the guidelines in co-operation with the development funds and programmes of the United Nations, the regional commissions and other relevant bodies and agencies of the United Nations system; and (c) report to the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1990 on the implementation of this resolution.

2. The guidelines, which are annexed to the present report, address the interests and needs of consumers world wide and recognize two principal concerns, namely, the imbalance that consumers face in economic terms, educational levels and bargaining power and the importance of promoting just, equitable and sustainable economic and social development. The guidelines provide a framework for Governments, particularly those of developing countries, to use in elaborating and strengthening consumer protection policies and legislation. They are also intended to encourage international co-operation in this field.

I. BACKGROUND

3. The adoption by the General Assembly in 1985 of a set of guidelines for consumer protection marked the culmination of nearly a decade of consultations among Governments and international organizations. The subject of consumer protection first appeared in a resolution of the Economic and Social Council in 1977, when the Secretary-General was requested to prepare a survey of national institutions and legislation in this field. In that resolution, the Council also recognized the need to co-ordinate the work of the United Nations system in consumer protection (2111 (LXIII) of 4 August 1977). In 1979 the Council, in its resolution 1979/74, requested that a comprehensive report be prepared by the Secretary-General containing proposals for measures on consumer protection for consideration by Governments, as well as proposals on organizational arrangements envisaged for carrying out work on consumer protection within the United Nations system. In 1981, the Council, aware of the need for an international policy framework within which further efforts for consumer protection could be pursued, requested the Secretary-General to continue his consultations for the development of a set of general guidelines (resolution 1981/62 of 23 July 1981). Draft guidelines were submitted to the Council in 1983; for the next two years these were the subject of consultation among Governments.

4. A number of ad hoc inter-agency meetings on consumer protection were held during these years, under the auspices of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, to discuss substantive issues related to the preparation of the various reports of the Secretary-General required for submission to the Council. In this connection, a consultation was also organized in 1981 at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific to elucidate the priority needs for the protection of consumers in developing countries and to consider how international organizations might best assist Governments in meeting such needs. The recommendations emanating from this consultation became an input to the discussion among Governments in the development of the guidelines. With the adoption of the guidelines, this organized process of consultation came to an end.

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GUIDELINES

A. Regional seminar for Latin America and the Caribbean

5. The mandate for action by the United Nations system, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 39/248, was limited to the dissemination of the guidelines. A booklet containing the document in all official languages was issued as a sales publication and distributed by the United Nations Secretariat.

6. Several Governments, however, felt the need for assistance with respect to the implementation of the guidelines. In that connection, the Governments of Argentina, Peru and Uruguay requested the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to organize, in co-operation with the United Nations Secretariat, a seminar on consumer protection for the Latin American and Caribbean region. The seminar was held at Montevideo, Uruguay, from 9 to 11 March 1987, and was attended by participants from 20 countries, as well as by observers from donor Governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations. The report of the seminar was subsequently widely distributed among Governments.

7. Specific recommendations were adopted and have been implemented in areas considered to be of priority for the region, such as the establishment of an informal communications network among the organizations of the region dedicated to consumer protection and the development of national and international data banks. The Government of Uruguay is performing the role of secretariat to the communications network and is publishing a bulletin containing information on consumer affairs within the region.

8. Furthermore, by bringing together government participants in the region, the seminar had a strong catalytic impact on consumer policy at the national level. For example, the Government of Ecuador increased the activities of the National Consumer Board (previously established following consideration of the guidelines), and the Government of Argentina decided to establish a Department of Consumer Protection. The Governments of Brazil, Ecuador, Peru and Argentina are considering legislation based on the guidelines; such legislation was approved by the Government of Honduras in 1989.

9. The seminar also stimulated regional co-operation among consumer groups. The International Organization of Consumers Unions (IOCU), a world-wide non-governmental organization which links the activities of consumer organizations, established a regional office in 1987 in Montevideo. It has since prepared a model consumer protection law, based on the guidelines and taking into account the Latin American and Caribbean legal experience. The model law has been used as a guide by a number of countries in the region in their consideration of new legislation. In 1988 IOCU convened a conference for consumer organizations in the Caribbean, which was also attended by government officials, calling for the implementation of the guidelines and establishing a consultative committee for the Caribbean.

B. Activities undertaken within the scope of Economic and Social Council resolution 1988/61

10. The adoption by the Economic and Social Council of resolution 1988/61 indicates the importance Member Governments assign to the implementation of the guidelines on consumer protection and to the need for assistance in this regard. The extent to which the Secretary-General is able to undertake activities to promote the guidelines, however, is constrained at present by the availability of extrabudgetary resources.

11. There are no regular programme resources available to the United Nations Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, which has the lead responsibility in the implementation of Council resolution 1988/61. It has therefore elaborated several proposals for financing through extrabudgetary resources, including the convening of additional regional seminars, topical symposia and the development of detailed guidelines in specific areas.

12. The regional seminar on consumer protection for Latin America and the Caribbean was envisaged as the first in a series of seminars to be held to enhance regional co-operation in implementing the guidelines and in tackling issues of concern to consumers at the regional level. Potential donors were approached for support of other such exercises; the Government of Australia subsequently committed funds for the convening of a regional seminar for Asia and the Pacific. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) agreed to co-finance the seminar, which is being organized by the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs in co-operation with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). A grant has also been obtained for the purposes of the seminar from the American Express Foundation.

13. Preparations are presently under way for the seminar, to be held at ESCAP headquarters from 19-22 June 1990. While it has not been possible, owing to a lack of resources, to undertake a systematic study of actions undertaken by Governments world wide in implementing the guidelines on consumer protection, a background report prepared in connection with the regional seminar on consumer protection for Asia and the Pacific indicates that some Governments in the region have taken action in implementing the guidelines. Consumer groups, which have been active at the national level, report that other countries are currently considering legislation based on the guidelines.

14. It should be noted, however, that the need for assistance in the area of consumer protection, particularly in developing countries, still remain great. The Government of Australia held a South Pacific Consumer Affairs Workshop in Sydney, from 4-9 February 1990, with the objective of contributing to greater understanding and co-operation in consumer issues in the South Pacific region. It was intended as the first educative stage in the process of establishing a Consumer Policy Forum for Asia and the Pacific, which could serve as an ongoing co-operative mechanism for the region. A number of major consumer problems were identified: lack of consumer protection legislation and adequate resources for enforcement, lack of a clearly identified consumer protection authority, problems related to a reliance on imported goods, inadequate labelling of goods, problems related to hazardous wastes and dangerous and defective goods, pricing, driftnetting, lack of redress systems, inadequate knowledge and training in consumer issues and lack of testing facilities, among others. The results of the workshop formed an input to the regional seminar on consumer protection for Asia and the Pacific, whose recommendations for follow-up are available at the time this report is being considered by the Economic and Social Council.

15. Interest has been expressed in other regions for the convening of similar seminars. Given current resource constraints, it would be necessary for such efforts to be supported by donors.

C. System-wide co-ordination in the implementation of the guidelines

16. In its resolution 1988/61, the Economic and Social Council also requested the Secretary-General to ensure system-wide co-ordination in the implementation of the guidelines. It should be noted that, prior to the adoption of that resolution, there had been no systematic follow-up in the area of consumer protection. It had been left to each agency or organization to implement the guidelines within the context of its own mandate. As a first step towards enhancing co-ordination, agencies and organizations of the United Nations system were invited to provide information on activities they were undertaking within the framework of the guidelines, including efforts towards assisting Governments to develop national consumer legislation and policies.

17. The responses received indicate that much of the work undertaken by agencies and organizations of the United Nations system is relevant to the various areas subsumed under the guidelines. This finding is not surprising, given the broad coverage of the guidelines. While the discussion that follows gives an impression of what is involved in this work, based on the replies received it should be noted that most organizations do not have a consumer protection programme as such, and that with few exceptions, the guidelines themselves are generally not used as a framework for their activities in this field.

18. In addition to its role in organizing regional seminars and in elaborating other proposals for extrabudgetary financing, the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs is also responsible, within its regular programme, for the publication of the Consolidated List of Products Whose Consumption and/or Sale Have Been Banned, Withdrawn, Severely Restricted or not Approved by Governments.

In its work, it co-operates with the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Environment Programme/International Register of Potentially Toxic Chemicals (UNEP/IRPTC). The purpose of the list is to consolidate all information on products harmful to health and the environment based on the work of relevant intergovernmental organizations. The current issue of the list contains information on restrictive regulatory measures taken by over 90 countries on some 700 pharmaceuticals, agricultural and industrial chemicals and consumer products. It also presents commercial information, including data on trade names and manufacturers. In recognition of the importance of the list in disseminating information on products harmful to health and the environment, the General Assembly, at its forty-fourth session, adopted resolution 44/226, which calls upon the Secretary-General, *inter alia*, to undertake a special effort to ensure a yet wider dissemination of the Consolidated List. It also requests the Secretary-General to make specific suggestions on ways and means of providing technical co-operation, including through appropriate United Nations organizations, to countries, in particular, developing countries, to create and strengthen their capacity to utilize the Consolidated List.

19. One of the main aims of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) is to create conditions for fair competition among traders and producers through the negotiated reductions of tariffs and other barriers to trade on a non-discriminatory basis. By promoting competition on an international basis, GATT aims at ensuring that consumers, in all of its member countries, have a wider choice of products to purchase at the best prices. The text of the General Agreement contains a number of provisions that permit countries to take measures to protect the interests of consumers from unfair trade practices. In 1989, the GATT Council decided to establish a Working Group on the Export of Domestically Prohibited Goods and Other Hazardous Substances. The Group is currently examining the trade-related aspects of these goods and substances in the light of GATT obligations and principles and having regard to the work of other international organizations in this area.

20. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) are currently collaborating in developing complementary procedures for prior informed consent, whereby an international shipment of a chemical or pesticide that is banned or severely restricted, in order to protect human health or the environment, should not proceed without the explicit agreement of the designated national authority in the importing country having been provided with all the relevant information. FAO has introduced the principle of prior informed consent in its International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides. The Code identifies hazards in the use of pesticides and assigns responsibilities to Governments, the pesticide industry and pesticide users regarding the safe and efficient use and control of agrochemicals. This principle has been introduced as well in the London Guidelines for the Exchange of Information on Chemicals in International Trade. The London Guidelines are aimed at enhancing the sound management of chemicals, and special provisions have been included regarding the exchange of information on banned or severely restricted chemicals in international trade, which call for co-operation between exporting and importing countries in the light of their joint responsibility for the protection of human health and the environment at the global level.

21. Growing international concern with the environment has also led to co-operation with respect to the movement and disposal of hazardous wastes. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 44/226, the Secretary-General, in co-operation with the Executive Director of UNEP, is requested to report to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session, through the Economic and Social Council, in the progress achieved in the implementation of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal. 1/

22. The joint FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission, established in 1962 to protect consumers and to ensure fair food trade practices, formulates standards on a wide range of commodities and food safety, pesticides residues in food, additives and contaminants. Governments are invited to accept standards and incorporate them in national legislation. The Codex Alimentarius also elaborates Codes of Practice as guidelines for Governments and promotes the adoption of open date marking and ingredient labelling. FAO also publishes notices of the adoption of new legal instruments on consumer protection with respect to food and agriculture and offers legal advisory services to Governments in this regard.

23. These activities are complemented by those of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). While UNESCO does not have a separate programme for consumer education, it offers assistance in the areas of teacher training and curriculum development for food safety. These efforts are targeted at the nutritional health and well-being of consumer groups, especially children and mothers, to prevent food-borne infections and contaminated food.

24. FAO undertakes agricultural marketing activities in order to facilitate production and distribution patterns responsive to the needs and desires of consumers, to encourage high levels of ethical conduct for those engaged in the production and distribution of goods and services to consumers and to encourage the development of market conditions that provide consumers with greater choice at lower prices.

25. Under the technical assistance programme for the development of co-operatives of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), there are several projects dedicated to the establishment of networks of consumer retail societies and wholesale societies through which basic consumer goods are made available to the general public at good quality and minimum cost. In addition, the ILO has many projects in developing countries that promote small-scale ventures in food processing and preservation, as well as in handicrafts. The approach emphasizes technologies adapted to local needs using production and/or packaging techniques that satisfy local consumer preferences, drawing on raw materials available in these countries.

26. The International Labour Organisation is also active in the area of standard setting. Its Convention on Occupational Safety and Health, the Convention on Guarding of Machinery, the Benzene Convention, the Occupational Cancer Convention and the Asbestos Convention all are concerned with the safety of the consumer at the workplace.

27. The World Health Organization is engaged in activities with respect to setting standards for the quality and appropriate use of pharmaceuticals. In addition, its international water standards programme promotes basic sanitary services in relation to community water supplies, as well as specific programmes and projects concerning drinking water quality.

28. UNDP has financed a large number of programmes and projects in the area of consumer protection, covering consumer co-operatives, credit schemes and training and advisory services in the fields of standard setting, quality control and marketing. With respect to measures relating to specific areas, UNDP has provided financing for projects in food and water security, including improved transport and storage facilities, control of contamination and enforcement of higher standards. UNDP has also contributed to the regional seminars on consumer protection for Latin America and the Caribbean and for Asia and the Pacific.

29. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is concerned with the role of industrial property in the protection of consumers. It recently undertook a study to demonstrate how the laws on trademarks, service marks, trade names, geographical indications and protection against unfair competition are effective tools for the protection of consumers. The study concludes that a well-balanced industrial property system must concern itself with the interests of consumers of goods and services, not simply those of the suppliers, mindful that economic development is a means to improve the quality of life, to which consumer protection is closely linked.

30. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) is concerned with the consumer of goods and services during travel, in places of tourist interest and at tourist facilities. The Seventh General Assembly of WTO adopted a resolution by which the subject of the security and protection of tourists and tourist facilities was introduced in the work programme. At present, activities include the gathering of information from Governments and the analysis of their views on possible security and protection measures, the preparation of standards for means of transport and accommodations used by the handicapped and co-operation with WHO in promoting health safety in travel.

31. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) assists Governments in developing legislation and policies to protect consumers in the area of air transport, including in such subjects as fare guarantees, baggage and denied boarding. Recently, ICAO published guidance material to assist Governments in developing policies and regulations to curb abusive use of computer reservations systems at the international level, in order to enhance fair competition among airlines and to protect the travelling public.

32. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) carries out activities for the promotion and protection of the economic interests of consumers. In 1980 a Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices was adopted. UNCTAD is also preparing a draft model law or laws for the control of restrictive business practices.

33. With respect to current activities at the regional level, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) reports that it does not have any specific programme in the area since national consumer legislation and policies are well developed in member countries and do not seem at present to require any further action by the Commission.

34. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Committee on Consumer Policy has been operating an informal notification procedure on safety measures concerning hazardous products since 1973. This procedure covers new product safety regulations, product bans and recalls and research projects. The Committee also has programmes in the areas of market transparency and consumer information and on the interaction between consumer policy, international trade and economic policies in general.

35. While the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) played an active role in the 1987 regional seminar held in Montevideo, it has indicated that it is not currently undertaking activities in the area of consumer protection. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) likewise has no information for purposes of the present report.

36. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) reports that it has carried out studies on ways national economic development can be promoted and stimulated through the organization of domestic trade, particularly the distribution and collection networks, and the establishment of a price and income policy which reflects the needs of the rural population, where the majority of people live. These studies highlight the important role national authorities have to play in outlining priority actions aimed at developing domestic trade, including the creation of government institutional structures.

37. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) cites a direct involvement in the development of consumer protection in the region since 1974, when it provided resources for a seminar on consumer protection. That meeting led directly to the founding of the regional headquarters of IOCU, which provides documentation and training services to Governments and non-governmental organizations. In 1978, ESCAP and IOCU held a joint consultation on the role of the United Nations system in the region in consumer protection. This was in turn followed by a regional consultation in 1981 (see para. 4 above).

38. Recently ESCAP prepared a paper on consumer protection issues in Asia and the Pacific. The document contains a number of recommendations for action by the Commission, as well as a recommendation for establishing a regional consumer policy forum for regular policy discussions on consumer issues and for the exchange of information and expertise at the intergovernmental level. ESCAP is also hosting the 1990 regional seminar for consumer protection for Asia and the Pacific.

III. CONCLUSIONS

39. The preceding paragraphs provide a broad overview of activities and actions taken in the implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 1988/61 with the aim of drawing conclusions for possible future activities.

40. In adopting the guidelines, Member States clearly recognized that consumer protection can no longer be seen strictly in domestic terms. International co-operation in this area can be of great value by enabling countries to draw upon the experience of others and avoid unnecessary duplication of effort. Such co-operation can take place, for example, through the development of product safety standards and testing procedures, or in the export of harmful products. The United Nations system is active in assisting Governments with measures to protect their consumers, such as with respect to the exchange of information on banned and severely restricted products. The two regional seminars that have taken place have served as a forum for the exchange of experiences, the co-operative development of regional programmes by government experts and the means by which an identification can be made for further assistance by the United Nations system.

41. At the global level, several factors have emerged in recent years that need to be taken into account when considering the overall issue of consumer concerns. These include environmental issues, the global debt crisis and its impact on financial services, the effect of the growth of advertising and the mass media on information available to consumers, as well as the globalization of manufacturing, production and distribution systems.

42. In the light of these developments, a number of further areas can be identified for assistance to Governments, at their request, in overall issues of concern to consumers world wide. These include the elaboration of detailed and more targeted guidelines in such areas as financial services and children's products and services.

43. At the regional level, it may be useful to organize further seminars on consumer protection for government officials, with follow-up by the regional commissions. The results of the seminar for Asia and the Pacific demonstrate the catalytic effect of such undertakings in co-operative efforts at this level.

44. With respect to the United Nations system, although many agencies and organizations are concerned with aspects of consumer protection, few of these activities have the protection of consumers as their sole objective, and for many it is only a subsidiary goal. Thought might be given to ways to permit the United Nations to give greater focus to this issue, which is so central to the well-being of people. There may be a need for structured consultations among the various bodies to consider how best to assist Governments, at their request. In examining avenues for enhancing its effectiveness in this area, the Secretary-General recognizes the important work of non-governmental organizations in disseminating and promoting the implementation of the guidelines, as well as the growing awareness by the private sector of the benefits of consumer policies.

45. Meaningful progress could be achieved by specific actions, such as: (a) the organization of regional seminars and follow-up on their recommendations; (b) the convening of workshops on topical issues with the aim of elaborating specific guidelines in these areas; (c) analytical work to identify areas of emerging concern; and (d) the development of greater co-ordination in the United Nations system to best answer the needs of Governments in the protection of consumers, through an ad hoc and flexible co-ordinating mechanism, including subject-oriented inter-agency consultations.

Notes

1/ See UNEP/IG.80/3.

Annex

GUIDELINES FOR CONSUMER PROTECTION

I. OBJECTIVES

1. Taking into account the interests and needs of consumers in all countries, particularly those in developing countries; recognizing that consumers often face imbalances in economic terms, educational levels, and bargaining power; and bearing in mind that consumers should have the right of access to non-hazardous products, as well as the importance of promoting just, equitable and sustainable economic and social development, these guidelines for consumer protection have the following objectives:

- (a) To assist countries in achieving or maintaining adequate protection for their population as consumers;
- (b) To facilitate production and distribution patterns responsive to the needs and desires of consumers;
- (c) To encourage high levels of ethical conduct for those engaged in the production and distribution of goods and services to consumers;
- (d) To assist countries in curbing abusive business practices by all enterprises at the national and international levels which adversely affect consumers;
- (e) To facilitate the development of independent consumer groups;
- (f) To further international co-operation in the field of consumer protection;
- (g) To encourage the development of market conditions which provide consumers with greater choice at lower prices.

II. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

2. Governments should develop, strengthen or maintain a strong consumer protection policy, taking into account the guidelines set out below. In so doing, each Government must set its own priorities for the protection of consumers in accordance with the economic and social circumstances of the country, and the needs of its population, and bearing in mind the costs and benefits of proposed measures.

3. The legitimate needs which the guidelines are intended to meet are the following:

- (a) The protection of consumers from hazards to their health and safety;
- (b) The promotion and protection of the economic interests of consumers;

(c) Access of consumers to adequate information to enable them to make informed choices according to individual wishes and needs;

(d) Consumer education;

(e) Availability of effective consumer redress;

(f) Freedom to form consumer and other relevant groups or organizations and the opportunity of such organizations to present their views in decision-making processes affecting them.

4. Governments should provide or maintain adequate infrastructure to develop, implement and monitor consumer protection policies. Special care should be taken to ensure that measures for consumer protection are implemented for the benefit of all sectors of the population, particularly the rural population.

5. All enterprises should obey the relevant laws and regulations of the countries in which they do business. They should also conform to the appropriate provisions of international standards for consumer protection to which the competent authorities of the country in question have agreed. (Hereinafter references to international standards in the guidelines should be viewed in the context of this paragraph.)

6. The potential positive role of universities and public and private enterprises in research should be considered when developing consumer protection policies.

III. GUIDELINES

7. The following guidelines should apply both to home-produced goods and services and to imports.

8. In applying any procedures or regulations for consumer protection, due regard should be given to ensuring that they do not become barriers to international trade and that they are consistent with international trade obligations.

A. Physical safety

9. Governments should adopt or encourage the adoption of appropriate measures, including legal systems, safety regulations, national or international standards, voluntary standards and the maintenance of safety records to ensure that products are safe for either intended or normally foreseeable use.

10. Appropriate policies should ensure that goods produced by manufacturers are safe for either intended or normally foreseeable use. Those responsible for bringing goods to the market, in particular suppliers, exporters, importers, retailers and the like (hereinafter referred to as "distributors"), should ensure that while in their care these goods are not rendered unsafe through improper handling or storage and that while in their care they do not become hazardous

through improper handling or storage. Consumers should be instructed in the proper use of goods and should be informed of the risks involved in intended or normally foreseeable use. Vital safety information should be conveyed to consumers by internationally understandable symbols wherever possible.

11. Appropriate policies should ensure that if manufacturers or distributors become aware of unforeseen hazards after products are placed on the market, they should notify the relevant authorities and, as appropriate, the public without delay. Governments should also consider ways of ensuring that consumers are properly informed of such hazards.

12. Governments should, where appropriate, adopt policies under which, if a product is found to be seriously defective and/or to constitute a substantial and severe hazard even when properly used, manufacturers and/or distributors should recall it and replace or modify it, or substitute another product for it; if it is not possible to do so within a reasonable period of time, the consumer should be adequately compensated.

B. Promotion and protection of consumers' economic interests

13. Government policies should seek to enable consumers to obtain optimum benefit from their economic resources. They should also seek to achieve the goals of satisfactory production and performance standards, adequate distribution methods, fair business practices, informative marketing and effective protection against practices which could adversely affect the economic interests of consumers and the exercise of choice in the market-place.

14. Governments should intensify their efforts to prevent practices which are damaging to the economic interests of consumers through ensuring that manufacturers, distributors and others involved in the provision of goods and services adhere to established laws and mandatory standards. Consumer organizations should be encouraged to monitor adverse practices, such as the adulteration of foods, false or misleading claims in marketing and service frauds.

15. Governments should develop, strengthen and maintain, as the case may be, measures relating to the control of restrictive and other abusive business practices which may be harmful to consumers, including means for enforcement of such measures. In this connection, Governments should be guided by their commitment to the Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 35/63 of 5 December 1980.

16. Governments should adopt or maintain policies that make clear the responsibility of the producer to ensure that goods meet reasonable demands of durability, utility and reliability, and are suited to the purpose for which they are intended, and that the seller should see that these requirements are met. Similar policies should apply to the provision of services.

17. Governments should encourage fair and effective competition in order to provide consumers with the greatest range of choice among products and services at the lowest cost.
18. Governments should, where appropriate, see to it that manufacturers and/or retailers ensure adequate availability of reliable after-sales service and spare parts.
19. Consumers should be protected from such contractual abuses as one-sided standard contracts, exclusion of essential rights in contracts, and unconscionable conditions of credit by sellers.
20. Promotional marketing and sales practices should be guided by the principle of fair treatment of consumers and should meet legal requirements. This requires the provision of the information necessary to enable consumers to take informed and independent decisions, as well as measures to ensure that the information provided is accurate.
21. Governments should encourage all concerned to participate in the free flow of accurate information on all aspects of consumer products.
22. Governments should, within their own national context, encourage the formulation and implementation by business, in co-operation with consumer organizations, of codes of marketing and other business practices to ensure adequate consumer protection. Voluntary agreements may also be established jointly by business, consumer organizations and other interested parties. These codes should receive adequate publicity.
23. Governments should regularly review legislation pertaining to weights and measures and assess the adequacy of the machinery for its enforcement.

C. Standards for the safety and quality of consumer goods and services

24. Governments should, as appropriate, formulate or promote the elaboration and implementation of standards, voluntary and other, at the national and international levels for the safety and quality of goods and services and give them appropriate publicity. National standards and regulations for product safety and quality should be reviewed from time to time, in order to ensure that they conform, where possible, to generally accepted international standards.
25. Where a standard lower than the generally accepted international standard is being applied because of local economic conditions, every effort should be made to raise that standard as soon as possible.
26. Governments should encourage and ensure the availability of facilities to test and certify the safety, quality and performance of essential consumer goods and services.

D. Distribution facilities for essential consumer goods and services

27. Governments should, where appropriate, consider:

(a) Adopting or maintaining policies to ensure the efficient distribution of goods and services to consumers; where appropriate, specific policies should be considered to ensure the distribution of essential goods and services where this distribution is endangered, as could be the case particularly in rural areas. Such policies could include assistance for the creation of adequate storage and retail facilities in rural centres, incentives for consumer self-help and better control of the conditions under which essential goods and services are provided in rural areas.

(b) Encouraging the establishment of consumer co-operatives and related trading activities, as well as information about them especially in rural areas.

E. Measures enabling consumers to obtain redress

28. Governments should establish or maintain legal and/or administrative measures to enable consumers or, as appropriate, relevant organizations to obtain redress through formal or informal procedures that are expeditious, fair, inexpensive and accessible. Such procedures should take particular account of the needs of low-income consumers.

29. Governments should encourage all enterprises to resolve consumer disputes in a fair, expeditious and informal manner, and to establish voluntary mechanisms, including advisory services and informal complaints procedures, which can provide assistance to consumers.

30. Information on available redress and other dispute-resolving procedures should be made available to consumers.

F. Education and information programmes

31. Governments should develop or encourage the development of general consumer education and information programmes, bearing in mind the cultural traditions of the people concerned. The aim of such programmes should be to enable people to act as discriminating consumers, capable of making an informed choice of goods and services, and conscious of their rights and responsibilities. In developing such programmes, special attention should be given to the needs of disadvantaged consumers, in both rural and urban areas, including low-income consumers and those with low or non-existent literacy levels.

32. Consumer education should, where appropriate, become an integral part of the basic curriculum of the education system, preferably as a component of existing subjects.

33. Consumer education and information programmes should cover such important aspects of consumer protection as the following:

(a) Health, nutrition, prevention of food-borne diseases and food adulteration;

(b) Product hazards;

(c) Product labelling;

(d) Relevant legislation, how to obtain redress, and agencies and organizations for consumer protection;

(e) Information on weights and measures, prices, quality, credit conditions and availability of basic necessities; and

(f) As appropriate, pollution and environment.

34. Governments should encourage consumer organizations and other interested groups, including the media, to undertake education and information programmes, particularly for the benefit of low-income consumer groups in rural and urban areas.

35. Business should, where appropriate, undertake or participate in factual and relevant consumer education and information programmes.

36. Bearing in mind the need to reach rural consumers and illiterate consumers, Governments should, as appropriate, develop or encourage the development of consumer information programmes in the mass media.

37. Governments should organize or encourage training programmes for educators, mass media professional and consumer advisers, to enable them to participate in carrying out consumer information and education programmes.

G. Measures relating to specific areas

38. In advancing consumer interests, particularly in developing countries, Governments should, where appropriate, give priority to areas of essential concern for the health of the consumer, such as food, water and pharmaceuticals. Policies should be adopted or maintained for product quality control, adequate and secure distribution facilities, standardized international labelling and information, as well as education and research programmes in these areas. Government guidelines in regard to specific areas should be developed in the context of the provisions of this document.

39. Food. When formulating national policies and plans with regard to food, Governments should take into account the need of all consumers for food security and should support and, as far as possible, adopt standards from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Health Organization Codex Alimentarius or, in their absence, other generally accepted international

food standards. Governments should maintain, develop or improve food safety measures, including, *inter alia*, safety criteria, food standards and dietary requirements and effective monitoring, inspection and evaluation mechanisms.

40. Water. Governments should, within the goals and targets set for the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, formulate, maintain or strengthen national policies to improve the supply, distribution and quality of water for drinking. Due regard should be paid to the choice of appropriate levels of service, quality and technology, the need for education programmes and the importance of community participation.

41. Pharmaceuticals. Governments should develop or maintain adequate standards, provisions and appropriate regulatory systems for ensuring the quality and appropriate use of pharmaceuticals through integrated national drug policies which could address, *inter alia*, procurement, distribution, production, licensing arrangements, registration systems and the availability of reliable information about pharmaceuticals. In so doing, Governments should take special account of the work and recommendations of the World Health Organization on pharmaceuticals. For relevant products, the use of that organization's Certification Scheme on the Quality of Pharmaceutical Products Moving in International Commerce and other international information systems on pharmaceuticals should be encouraged. Measures should also be taken, as appropriate, to promote the use of international non-proprietary names (INNs) for drugs, drawing on the work done by the World Health Organization.

42. In addition to the priority areas indicated above, Governments should adopt appropriate measures in other areas, such as pesticides and chemicals, in regard, where relevant, to their use, production and storage, taking into account such relevant health and environmental information as Governments may require producers to provide and include in the labelling of products.

IV. INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

43. Governments should, especially in a regional or subregional context:

(a) Develop, review, maintain or strengthen as appropriate, mechanisms for the exchange of information on national policies and measures in the field of consumer protection;

(b) Co-operate or encourage co-operation in the implementation of consumer protection policies to achieve greater results within existing resources. Examples of such co-operation could be collaboration in the setting up or joint use of testing facilities, common testing procedures, exchange of consumer information and education programmes, joint training programmes and joint elaboration of regulations;

(c) Co-operate to improve the conditions under which essential goods are offered to consumers, giving due regard to both price and quality. Such co-operation could include joint procurement of essential goods, exchange of

information on different procurement possibilities and agreements on regional product specifications.

44. Governments should develop or strengthen information links regarding products which have been banned, withdrawn or severely restricted in order to enable other importing countries to protect themselves adequately against the harmful effects of such products.

45. Governments should work to ensure that the quality of the products and information relating to such products, does not vary from country to country in a way that would have detrimental effects on consumers.

46. Governments should work to ensure that policies and measures for consumer protection are implemented with due regard to their not becoming barriers to international trade, and that they are consistent with international trade obligations.



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Second regular session of 1990
CO-ORDINATION QUESTIONS

Mid-term review of the World Decade for Cultural Development
(1988-1997)

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 41/187 of 8 December 1986, the General Assembly proclaimed the period 1988-1997 the World Decade for Cultural Development, to be observed under the auspices of the United Nations and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Assembly requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director-General of UNESCO to report biennially to the Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, on the progress in the implementation of the goals and objectives set out for the Decade.

2. At its forty-fourth session, the General Assembly, having considered the progress report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and of the Director-General of UNESCO (A/44/284-E/1989/109), in its resolution 44/238 of 22 December 1989 expressed its support for the recommendation contained in paragraph 92 of the report, which read:

"With a view to carrying out a mid-Decade evaluation and giving the Decade fresh impetus, the international community might wish to consider organizing a global review during the course of the Decade under the auspices of the United Nations and UNESCO".

In the same resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General, with the assistance of the Director-General of UNESCO, to obtain the views of Governments, organs and organizations of the United Nations system, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations on the objectives and scope of the global mid-Decade review in 1993, as recommended in paragraph 92 of the report, and to submit those views to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session, through the Economic and Social Council.

3. Information received from other Governments and organizations of the United Nations system at a later date will be issued as an addendum to the present report.

II. SUMMARY OF REPLIES RECEIVED FROM GOVERNMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENCIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

A. Governments

4. The Government of China stated in its reply that the four objectives of the Decade as defined in the Plan of Action summarized comprehensively the main task of the Decade and constituted general guidelines for the activities of Member States in the area at the national level. Those objectives were also important criteria for evaluating the success or failure of the Decade.

5. In the view of the Government of China, the five modalities for action contained in the Plan of Action would facilitate the co-ordination of activities of the Decade at the global level.

6. It was emphasized in the reply of China that the activities of the Decade should be developed in various ways and should take into account regional and national characteristics and cultural identities. In that regard the Government of China felt that the programme for the activities of the Decade in the Asia and the Pacific region had not been fully addressed. That region of the world was heir to an ancient civilization. It was made up mainly of developing countries with their own problems of economic and cultural development, and due consideration should therefore be given to the region in formulating programmes and guidelines for the Decade or in implementing them.
7. In its reply, the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany supported the idea of carrying out a mid-term review of the Decade, which in its view should concentrate on the effort to identify difficulties in the implementation and possible ways to overcome those difficulties, rather than on a stock-taking of individual projects and contributions made so far by Member States.
8. The most appropriate forum for a mid-Decade review, in the view of the Federal Republic of Germany, could be an international meeting of experts, as suggested in paragraph 147 of the Plan of Action.
9. Taking into account rapid changes in international relations and in global political life, the Member States might need to redefine more thoroughly some of the Decade's goals. In that case Governments would have to be involved in the mid-term review process, and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany suggested that that procedure take place in the form of written consultations among countries.
10. As far as the proposal contained in UNESCO document CC-90/CONF.203/9 of 23 February 1990 is concerned, namely, that the review could also take the form of "an intergovernmental meeting preceded by regional consultations and a preparatory conference", the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany considered that that type of review would not only be out of line with the general policy of the United Nations system of trying to reduce the number of conferences and meetings, but would also absorb the scarce resources available in Member States as well as in United Nations bodies for the purposes of the Decade. At the same time it would jeopardize the reasonable balance between substantive activities within the Decade and procedures administering those activities.
11. The Government of the German Democratic Republic welcomed the idea of undertaking a mid-term review of the implementation of the goals and objectives of the Decade. Such an event, in the view of the German Democratic Republic, could take stock of the activities organized during the first half of the Decade and give fresh impulses towards the fulfilment of the objectives of the Decade in the remaining period.
12. The German Democratic Republic suggested that the mid-term review could be undertaken at a conference of experts to be sponsored jointly by the United Nations and UNESCO.

13. The Government of the German Democratic Republic did not exclude the possibility of holding a global cultural conference, but such a conference, at the level of ministers of culture or other government representatives, should be convened, in its view, at the end of the World Decade for Cultural Development and could be preceded or followed by regional conferences.

14. In its reply, the Government of Malta supported the recommendation contained in paragraph 92 of the report on the Decade concerning a global mid-Decade review; nevertheless, it recommended stronger regional co-operation in the implementation of the goals and objectives of the Cultural Development Decade.

15. In its turn, Malta provided information about the activities of the national committee and the two sub-committees aimed at the development of wide regional co-operation in the field of culture. In particular, one of the sub-committees was preparing a festival of the settecento and the second was responsible for organizing a Mediterranean ethnographic film and video week. Major attention in the country's activities within the Decade was being paid to promoting women's participation in those activities.

16. The Government of Mongolia stated in its reply that it fully endorsed the recommendation for organizing a global review of the status of the Decade with a view to carrying out a mid-Decade evaluation and giving the Decade a fresh impetus. The Government of Mongolia considered that the scope of the review should be so broad as to involve all nations.

17. In its reply, the Government of the Netherlands stated that the Intergovernmental Committee on the World Decade for Cultural Development, established within UNESCO, should play a central and co-ordinating role in the preparation of the review and, in co-operation with some other United Nations bodies, should undertake to formulate the terms of reference for such a review.

18. In the view of the Netherlands, the mid-term review should include an examination of organizational and administrative matters concerning the Decade, as well as an evaluation of project implementation, assessment of financial needs and available means.

19. The mid-Decade review might also serve to re-examine and eventually to adapt the goals that were set at the beginning of the Decade. The role of the Decade in the light of the fourth United Nations development decade, notably its contribution to the cultural dimension of development, should also be assessed in the process of a global review.

20. The Government of the Netherlands suggested that the following topics closely related to the cultural dimensions of development should be addressed during a global mid-Decade review:

(a) The protection of the natural and cultural heritage against the effects of demographic and economic growth;

(b) The development of traditional human and cultural capital, in particular, traditional skills and crafts;

(c) The improvement of access to information on social and cultural aspects of the development process, in order to facilitate an open discussion based on solid criteria, and so on.

21. The Government of the Netherlands believed that, depending on the outcome of the mid-term review in 1993, it might be appropriate to design a strategy for the second half of the Decade.

22. The Government of Norway stated in its reply that the national committee for the Decade would host a meeting of representatives of the decade committees of some European countries, probably in December 1990. Norway therefore wished to defer its contribution to a global mid-Decade review until after such a meeting had been held.

23. In its reply, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic supported in principle the idea of conducting an evaluation and a global review at the mid-point of the Decade. At the same time, it considered that the question required much in-depth study in order to determine the criteria for such an evaluation. In particular with regard to the first objective - the acknowledgement of the cultural dimension of development - it would be necessary to define the extent of evolution in the convictions of decision-makers in the fields of economic and social development with regard to cultural dimensions in order to establish the links between the Cultural Decade and the fourth United Nations development decade.

24. As far as the second objective of the Decade was concerned, namely, the affirmation and enrichment of cultural identities, in the view of the Syrian Arab Republic, taking into account the cultural characteristics common to certain States in the same region or the number of ethnic groups within a single country, regional consultations would be required.

25. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic suggested that the basic objectives of a mid-Decade evaluation could be:

(a) To focus on a perspective for the future and to define what additional steps must be taken to provide stimulus for the Decade, in order for its activities to be continued and extended beyond the end of the Decade;

(b) To evaluate the achievements under the major projects, such as the silk routes, the revival of the library of Alexandria, the observance of the five-hundredth anniversary of the encounter between the two worlds, the Seville Exhibition, and so on;

(c) To evaluate the degree of participation of UNESCO, United Nations organizations, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in supporting the activities of States, particularly developing and least developed countries, within the Decade.

26. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic pointed out in its reply that the above views were submitted on the understanding that a mid-point evaluation of the implementation of the goals and objectives of the Decade could be carried out in the form of an international conference during the Decade under the auspices of the United Nations and UNESCO.

27. The Government of Turkey stressed in its reply the lack of substantial results in the implementation of the objectives during the first two years of the Decade. Among major obstacles, it pointed to the lack of financial resources and recommended that all the international organizations make their contribution to the case.

28. Having expressed its support for the idea of a mid-Decade review at a global level, the Government of Turkey suggested that such a review, besides identifying bottle-necks, shortcomings and other problems, should also help to identify viable projects to be executed within the Decade.

B. Organizations and agencies of the United Nations system

29. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization expressed support for the idea of convening an international intergovernmental meeting in 1993, with the purpose of reviewing and evaluating the implementation of the Decade's objectives. In that regard it referred to UNESCO General Conference resolution 3.4, adopted at its twenty-fifth session, which invited the Director-General "to take the necessary steps, in co-operation with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, to define the modalities for a mid-Decade evaluation, in the form of a global review to take place in 1993".

30. The Intergovernmental Committee established within UNESCO for the co-ordination of activities at the national, regional and global levels for the Decade, in the view of UNESCO, could serve as the preparatory body for a global intergovernmental meeting in 1993. At its second regular session, in February 1990, the Committee discussed the matter and decided to reconsider it at its special session, scheduled for September 1990, taking into account the results of the consultations of the Secretary-General of the United Nations with Governments and international organizations.

31. UNESCO believed that an intergovernmental meeting could be accompanied by a forum of non-governmental organizations. It might also be preceded by regional consultations. UNESCO, as the lead agency for the Decade, would be ready to co-ordinate the preparation of working documents for a global intergovernmental meeting, as well as for regional meetings.

32. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) stated in its reply that while ILO activities falling within the framework of the Decade could be identified, their actual impact on cultural development would be extremely difficult to evaluate. In the view of ILO, a meaningful evaluation of the Decade would have to be closely linked to its objectives, which, however, were outlined in such broad terms that it was difficult to translate them into clearly defined operational categories.

33. In this connection, ILO suggested that UNESCO be invited to prepare a paper indicating the possible scope, objectives and methods of a global review, which could be submitted to various bodies and agencies of the United Nations system for their comments.

34. In its reply, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) welcomed the proposal to conduct a global mid-Decade review and suggested that the scope of such an exercise include, *inter alia*, some objectives relating specifically to the work of the agencies involved in relief aid and development assistance activities.

35. Among those objectives, UNHCR mentioned, in particular, the inventory of measures taken by the agencies to incorporate socio-cultural analyses and assessments as institutionalized features of their programme cycles; the assessment of the efficacy and the impact of the foregoing measures in terms of tangible improvements in needs assessment and in the identification, design, execution and outputs of projects; and the inventory of measures planned or proposed by those agencies in order to strengthen further their institutional capacity to identify, analyse and assess the socio-cultural factors within the framework of their respective programme cycles and mandated activities.

36. UNHCR was prepared to assist in planning that aspect of a global mid-term review of the Decade.

37. The reply of the World Bank contained the proposal that the scope of a global mid-Decade review include, as a priority, the safeguard of cultural property and heritage under World Bank-financed projects. For the projects with significant cultural property issues, the World Bank required the cultural property assessment to be carried out by national Governments.

38. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) suggested in its reply that a mid-Decade evaluation include the actions that had already been taken to limit or minimize the impacts of anthropogenic pollution on a number of historical and cultural monuments and structures, as well as on some national forests that were of great social and cultural significance.

39. From the standpoint of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the scope of a global mid-Decade review should include the following issues:

(a) Women's contribution to development, particularly in the household and informal sectors of the economy, taking account of cultural aspects;

(b) Women, environment and sustainable development;

(c) The problem of choice of technology, with particular attention to the cultural context of both most advanced technology and technology suitable for rural and urban areas, with the purpose of alleviating the burden of women's work, thereby strengthening the cultural dimension of development and reaffirming cultural identities.

40. In its reply, the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs suggested that in identifying the forms of evaluation and review of the Decade, consideration should be given to initially organizing a series of regional seminars under the auspices of the United Nations and UNESCO during the course of the Decade. In the view of the Department, an international conference with participation of prominent figures in the field of culture from all over the world could also contribute to the success of the Decade.

III. CONCLUSIONS

41. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 44/238, the Secretary-General of the United Nations sent communications to the Governments of all the Member States, to 39 organizations, agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system and to 7 departments of the United Nations Secretariat with the request that they give their views concerning a global mid-term review of the World Decade for Cultural Development in 1993 and the possible form of such a review and its scope and objectives.

42. Replies have been received from only 10 Governments, 12 organizations and agencies, and 1 Department. Moreover, out of those 23 replies, only 15 contained the information requested by the Secretary-General. These circumstances made it difficult to arrive at definitive conclusions that would represent the more or less complete view of the world community on the subject.

43. Nevertheless, the analysis of the replies available gives tentative indications of the views of Governments and the organizations of the United Nations system.

44. In their replies almost all the Governments and organizations supported in principle the idea of conducting a mid-Decade review and evaluation of the status of implementation of the goals and objectives of the Decade. Three countries and two organizations supported the convening for that purpose in 1993 of an international conference with the participation of ministers of culture, prominent figures in the field of culture or experts in the area. There was a suggestion that the Intergovernmental Committee for the Decade, established within UNESCO, serve as the preparatory body for such a conference.

45. Five replies contained proposals to carry out a mid-Decade evaluation in the form of seminars, meetings of experts, consultations and other forums at the regional level under the auspices of the United Nations and UNESCO. Some Governments and organizations believed that such regional forums could precede or follow an international event and thus contribute to the global review of the Decade.

46. Some Governments mentioned the slow start of the Decade, referring to the very broad spectrum of objectives included in the Plan of Action, as well as to the lack of appropriate financial resources. Bearing that in mind they suggested that a mid-Decade review should concentrate on reconsidering some of the objectives and setting out concrete tasks for the second half of the Decade.

47. Much attention was paid in the replies to the first objective of the Decade, namely, the acknowledgement of cultural dimensions of development, and thus to the link of the Cultural Development Decade with the fourth United Nations development decade, the goals and objectives of which should include cultural aspects of development.

48. Among the objectives to be concentrated upon during a mid-Decade review, the Governments mentioned in the first place such problems as cultural aspects of the socio-economic development of developing countries, especially of least developed States, questions of cultural identity, cultural property and heritage, problems of many ethnic groups within a single State, and so on.

49. The organizations of the United Nations system suggested the inclusion in the mid-Decade review of objectives and issues that are of concern to them in the context of their activities in their respective fields of competence.
